trated in FIG. **12**A without a stop. The embodiment in FIG. **15**A is in the collapsed configuration. Expandable member **90** joins elongated plates **80** and **90** together. Other aspects of the insertion guide device are generally the same as previously described above. An alternative embodiment of the insertion guide device may have two elongated plates both having stops. Thus, the insertion guide may have two elongated plates such as those described in FIG. **15**A. Other aspects of this alternative embodiment may be the same as those previously described. FIG. **16**B illustrates the insertion guide device in FIG. **16**A in the expanded (also referred to as distracted) configuration.

FIG. **17** shows the insertion guide device of FIG. **16**A inserted into the intervertebral disc space. Stop feature **101** engages the edge of superior vertebral body **110** to prevent the insertion guide device from moving further anterior. In alternative embodiments, the stop feature may engage the edge of the inferior vertebral body **96**, or in embodiments with two stops, an edge of the inferior and superior vertebral body may be engaged by a stop feature.

While preferred embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described herein, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that such embodiments are provided by way of example only. Numerous variations, changes, and substitutions will now occur to those skilled in the art without departing from the invention. It should be understood that various alternatives to the embodiments of the invention described herein may be employed in practicing the invention. It is intended that the following claims define the scope of the invention and that methods and structures within the scope of these claims and their equivalents be covered thereby.

What is claimed is:

1. A delivery instrument for facilitating placement of an interbody implant into an intervertebral space of a patient, said delivery instrument comprising:

a plurality of elongated plates disposed adjacent one another, each elongated plate having an outer surface and an inner surface, and each elongated plate having a proximal portion and a distal portion, wherein the distal portion of the elongated plates is sized and shaped to fit into the intervertebral space, and wherein the distal portion of the elongated plates is configured to engage a vertebral body in the intervertebral space; and

an expandable member coupled to the plurality of elongated plates over at least a portion of a length of the plurality of elongated plates, the expandable member having an outer surface and an inner surface, wherein the inner surface of the expandable member is disposed over at least a portion of the outer surface of each of the plurality of elongated plates, such that at least a portion of the inner surface of the expandable member and the inner surfaces of the plurality of elongated plates form an enclosed tube sized and shaped to receive the interbody implant,

wherein the expandable member expands to accommodate an increased distance between at least two of the plurality of elongated plates as the elongated plates translate relative to one another to allow the interbody implant to pass through the enclosed tube,

wherein the plurality of elongated plates are expandable to allow the delivery instrument to expand in multiple directions in order to accommodate various sizes of interbody implants, and

wherein the plurality of elongated plates have a longitudinally oriented slit located therealong, the slit configured to allow the plurality of elongated plates to expand and contract.

2. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, wherein the expandable member is an elastomeric tube that is disposed over the plurality of elongated plates.

3. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, wherein the expandable member comprises two or more flexible sheets of resilient material that extend from one elongated plate to another elongated plate.

4. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of elongated plates have a geometry configured to engage the interbody implant passing through the tube, and wherein the plurality of elongated plates have a geometry that guides the interbody implant into the intervertebral space.

5. The delivery instrument of claim **4**, wherein the geometry that engages the interbody implant comprises a plurality of rails extending from the plurality of elongated plates.

6. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, wherein the longitudinally oriented slit comprises a stress relief feature.

7. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of plates are coupled together adjacent their proximal portion.

8. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, wherein at least one of the plurality of elongated plates comprises a finger loop adjacent a proximal end thereof, the finger loop configured to facilitate grasping by an operator's finger.

9. The delivery instrument of claim **1**, further comprising a stop element disposed adjacent a distal portion of at least one of the plurality of elongated plates, the stop element configured to limit insertion of the delivery instrument into the intervertebral space.

10. A system for delivering an implant to an intervertebral space of a patient, said system comprising:

the delivery instrument of claim **1**; and

an interbody implant.

11. A method for delivering an interbody implant into an intervertebral space between adjacent vertebral bodies of a patient, said method comprising:

providing a delivery instrument having a plurality of elongated plates disposed adjacent one another and coupled together with an expandable member disposed over at least a portion of an outer surface of each of the plurality of elongated plates, such that inner surfaces of the plurality of elongated plates and the expandable member form an enclosed tube;

advancing the interbody implant along the enclosed tube formed by the plurality of elongated plates and the expandable member;

translating the plurality of elongated plates relative to one another as the interbody implant advances along the enclosed tube, wherein translating the plurality of elongated plates comprises expanding or contracting a slit disposed in at least one of the plurality of elongated plates;

ejecting the interbody implant from the delivery instrument; and

returning the elongated plates to an unbiased configuration after the interbody implant has been ejected.

12. The method of claim **11**, wherein translating the plurality of elongated plates comprises moving the plurality of plates away from one another.

13. The method of claim **11**, wherein translating the plurality of elongated plates comprises expanding or collapsing the expandable member to accommodate an increase or